

[97:43]

Chapter 1

The Tapirapé River

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[Ed., pp. 43-47 and most of p. 49 are omitted;
Map 2 appears on p. 48 in the original text.]

[97:49] Topography of the Surrounding Area

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The Tapirapé River flows through a vast savanna region which is separated from it, along most of its course, by a strip of forest quite irregular in width. This savanna, as a rule, extends [97:50] over such flat ground that the horizon would be very wide if it were not for the trees, two or three meters high, which stand a few paces from each other and make up what is called the campo cerrado [Tr., savanna with scattered scrub forest]. It is true that sometimes the distance between the trees increases, and they become better developed and a few meters higher. There are also large empty areas, that is to say, grassland completely free of arboreal growth. Sometimes these stretches are crossed by a narrow forest strip of high trees concealing a small stream, or they are broken by swampy groves of muriti palms. This does not prevent large areas of empty grassland from remaining flooded during the dry season, when their black soil is often so slippery that it well deserves the name of "soap" which I gave these places of involuntary gymnastics as I skated over them.

[134]

On the other hand, there is no doubt that most of the grasslands surrounding the Tapirapé River dry out at that time of year to such a point that they become easily inflammable. On June 15, 1935, while I was in Tampitana [later referred to as Tampitaua], the village of the Tapirapé Indians, I saw pillars of smoke rising to the north, south-west, and east, and this brought to my attention the existence of grasslands and people in those parts. The soil of the dry grasslands can be so hard that the Indians massage their feet and legs after having walked several hours over it. Only rarely, however, is this soil rocky. I found it covered with small, round, brownish-red stones in only a few restricted areas, especially in small stretches of campo cerrado close to the forest inhabited by the Tapirapé.

[Text continues on p. 6]

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[491]

114 I left at 6:30 the following morning. Everything was wet with
 133 dew. I slated over a stretch of black earth, damp and slippery
 132 ("soap"). I saw jaguar tracks. At eight o'clock, I reached a flooded
 134 forest strip which I had to ford. The same thing happened after walk-
 ing another ten minutes. At ten o'clock I reached a traditional
 Tapirapé resting place located in a small patch of forest which con-
 tains fresh water. I rested there until four in the afternoon, and then
 set out again and waded through a swampy area. At 5:30 I reached
 dry scrub land where I was able to set up camp for the night. Before
 134 going to sleep, I heard frequent jaguar calls.

When I awoke on the twenty-first my clothes were soaked
 through with dew. I set out at six o'clock. Half an hour later, I was
 lost in a large and swampy muriti grove. At seven o'clock I reached
 dry scrub land, and at 9:15 the great forest. During the first 15
 minutes of walking, the ground of the forest was more or less dry, but
 after that it became completely flooded. I walked for an hour and a
 half in water, which flowed in several places. At 11:30 [97:52] I
 241 found manioc in a brook. I then crossed four gardens separated from
 each other by strips of forest. At a quarter before one, I met four
 361 youths of the Tapirapé tribe, and half an hour later, still walking
 through the immense forest, I spotted in its midst the village of those
 Indians.

When I returned from the village to Porto Salvação on August 5
 487 of the same year, I made the whole trip in a single day. I left at
 dawn with a Tapirapé youth. Although these Indians, as a rule, walk
 a little more slowly than the local Brazilian frontiersmen, their pace
 is still quite rapid and very even so that they proceed at the same
 speed through forest and grassland, and since they hardly stop to rest in
 the daytime, they may walk 40 or 50 kilometers a day.

On the way back, we took a different course through the forest.
 133 The area we had gone through on the way out was still flooded. We
 487 walked on ground that was quite dry, making a wide curve to the west.
 We reached the grassland within two hours. In many areas the Indians
 241 had already burned the grass, and our feet and legs were free of that
 hindering growth which adds so much to the traveler's weariness. Once
 in a while, a fresh breeze blew upon us. We walked four hours through
 137 open grassland and scrub forest, with frequent glimpses of pairs of deer,
 136 until we reached the traditional Tapirapé resting place in the small
 484 patch of forest containing fresh water. There we found Reverend Kegel

[64] apparently was aggravated by pneumonia. During the rainy season
[73] that followed, this epidemic caused great mortality throughout
[165] the tribe, also killing Itaranché and his wife. Then the separa-
[66] tion returned to Tampititua.

[361] The eighteenth century map reproduced in this work points
out with three triangles the "Aldeas do Gentio Tapirapé [villages
of the Tapirapé people]." In his account of Alfredo Olimpio de
Oliveira's 1911 expedition, Anyones Costa (222-223) writes as
follows about the Tapirapé of the time: "These Indians occupy
three villages, the first one located two days' journey from the
riverbank, the second one three days' away. The explorer did not
visit the third one."

[113] The following appears in the account of the Dominican ex-
pedition of 1914 printed in the Memagrio do Santo Rosário (317):
"The Tapirapé form three groups, or rather three malocas [vil-
lages], five days' journey apart. The Indians can walk 50 kilo-
[481] meters a day. This shows how huge is the region inhabited by
such a relatively sparse tribe. The village we visited had 16 huts,
[592] each one sheltering several families. It is true that when the
[609] Fathers drew near, some of the huts were emptied, and families,
urged on by a suspicious Chief, ran to hide in the forest. The peo-
[161] ple we found did not exceed 160 souls, and from this it may easily
be inferred that the tribe does not include more than about a
thousand members."

[621] [103:186] The note published in 1912 about Dr. Francisco
Mandacaré's journey states that the Tapirapé village visited by
[161] this explorer contained 268 inhabitants and that "almost invari-
ably, a village merely consists of a single and numerous family."
The number of villages, however, is not mentioned (cf. Kisen-
berth 2, 43-44).

[161] The same applies to the account of the trip by the inspector
of the Indians, mentioned earlier, which only states that "some
1,000 or 1,500" Tapirapé were found (Glass, 139).

[161] Reverend Kegel told me that in August of 1932 he found in
Tampititua some 14 houses with slightly more than 220 occupants.
These people, as we have already mentioned, split up in Septem-
ber, but were together again when we visited them the following
year. From 50 to 60 of them died during the 1932-1933 rainy
[165] season, and only three or four children born at that time were seen
by this missionary.

252 In the Tapirapé barbecues, the height at which the grille is
[251] fastened varies with its different functions. It is placed low to
roast meat or fish, and higher to dry it.

171 The pot is held by three stones laid around the fire, as I also
252 noted among the Karajá and at Koch-Grünberg (2, III, 48) ob-
[354] served among the Taulipáng of the Rio Branco basin. What Karl
von den Steinen (2, 215) said of the Xingu Indians, that is: "The
men roasted [meat], but never boiled it," may be said also of the
Tapirapé and of numerous other South American tribes (cf. Baldus
7, 142 and Koch-Grünberg 2, III, 91, 335, 351). Speaking of the
Karajá, Krause (2, 253) amends this rule with the fact that "the
men also know how to boil [meat]," as they show on trips when-
ever necessary. This cannot be said of the Tapirapé. They do
●[481] not carry pots on their journeys since they go on foot, while those
Indians travel by canoe and therefore can take along with them
heavy and breakable cooking utensils. Aside from this, the
252 division of labor is so strict among the sexes that the Tapirapé-man,
462 if for some reason he does not have a wife, misses her simply from
the fact that he cannot eat stew unless he is willing to take it from
other families. On the other hand, the roasting of large animals
is usually done by the men. It is only when game is killed close
to the village that in some cases the women barbecue it. [Ed., a
paragraph is omitted.]

124 With the aim of setting up a Tapirapé zoological vocabulary,
and also of finding out which animals were eaten by the inhabitants
of Tampiitáua or by certain groups among them, I repeatedly showed
to numerous persons of different ages and sex the figures in
Rodolpho von Ihering's book entitled Da vida dos nossos animais.
Fauna do Brasil [The Habits of Our Animals. Brazilian Fauna]
(Rotermund & Co., São Leopoldo, 1934). This gave them much
pleasure, and I recommend this method to Indianists as a way of
establishing rapport. It also makes rather strict controls possible,
since each animal is identified by several if not by numerous ex-
perts, and its name is pronounced several times by many individ-
uals. Of course, a single look is not always sufficient for the In-
dian to recognize the animal represented. It is often necessary to
[117:93] add comments about its size, color, motions, cry, and
habits. Concerning certain insects, for example, the size of the

1:Baldus--178 E-5 (1935, 1947)1944-1949 SP22 Tapirapé SP22

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Photo. 24



Men leaving for the hunt.

organization, in technology, in ceremonial and religious life, in economics and, in fact, in almost all realms of life. In the space of a short paper it will be possible to indicate only a few of these modifications. One of the most striking changes has to do with the relations of the Tapirapé with their traditional enemies, the Carajá. In 1940 the Tapirapé told of their fear of the Carajá who had attacked them several times in the past, and Tapirapé men traveling along the Araguaya River with the writer hid in the bottom of the boat in fear of their traditional foe. No Tapirapé would have dared enter a Carajá village without the protection of a Brazilian. But in 1953 the new Tapirapé village was situated within six or seven kilometers of a Carajá village. Two Tapirapé youths, for lack of Tapirapé women of marriageable age, had married Carajá girls, and following the rule of matrilocal residence which both Carajá and Tapirapé cultures share they lived in the Carajá village and worked with their in-laws. Each day during my 1953 visit there were Carajá visitors in the Tapirapé village. They came to exchange fish, game or other items for Tapirapé manioc — for the Tapirapé are by tradition better gardeners than the Carajá. A friendly Carajá even joined the Tapirapé men to dance and sing during one of their ceremonials, and one evening a group of Tapirapé accepted the invitation of the Carajá to attend their wrestling matches on the beach in front of the Carajá village. One must conclude that old and traditional enmities and antagonisms between peoples can fade out easily and quickly unless there are deep-seated economic or territorial bases for such antagonisms. [582]

Another striking change between the Tapirapé in 1940 and those of 1953 was their recent adaptation to canoe travel. In 1940, the Tapirapé might have been classified as "foot Indians". They neither made nor owned canoes. Many Tapirapé were unable to swim. They were all most inept when forced to travel by canoe. In 1953, six Tapirapé men owned canoes they had acquired from the Carajá, some had to make canoes, and

of fish, of insects, and several natural phenomena, especially thunder. 756
 have children: that is, they are thought to control "spirits of chil- 82
 dren" (20). A shaman steals, or more simply, takes spirits of children 842
 from these sources and brings them to a woman while she sleeps.
 Parents who wish children can bring presents to a *pancé* to "make him
 dream and bring a child to them". Most Tapirapé parents can identify
 the source of their children and the shaman who brought them. One
 father explained that he had taken honey to the *pancé* Urukumu, mak-
 ing him dream, and that Urukumu had then traveled to the house of
 Thunder and brought back a child to his wife. Another gave a present
 of fish to a shaman who brought back a child from the small fish called
piáu (*Leporinus* sp.); and yet another gave honey to a *pancé* who
 brought back a child from the horsefly (*Tabanidae*).

To the Tapirapé all good and likewise all evil can be laid at the 756
 door of the shaman. Consequently a phenomenon such as barrenness is 842
 always the fault of the shaman. A barren woman or a man with no
 children by his wife must have "quarrelled much with the *pancé*". For
 example, it was clear to Kamairaho that his failure to have children by
 the three wives with whom he had lived during his lifetime was due
 to the shaman: "They do not want me to have a child", he said.
 He had no suspicion concerning his own sterility, even though his pre-
 sent and third wife had had a daughter by her first husband; for
 according to Tapirapé belief, all men who have sexual relations with [837]
 a woman during her pregnancy are biological fathers of child, and
 Kamairaho was in this manner the "father" of several children.

The safety of Tapirapé men depends upon the power of their shaman 225
 during the period each October and November when they must swim 756
 while they fish and shoot turtles: for in this region of Brazil rivers are 481
 infested with alligators, sting rays (*Potamotrygon* *histris*), and the 825
 carnivorous fish called piranha (*Serrasalminae*). The Tapirapé also believe
 that large snakes lurk in deep pools of the rivers ready to wrap
 themselves around men and pull them beneath the water. During the
 year men will not swim in deep water unless it is absolutely necessary

(20) Thunder, night, monkeys, wild pigs, jacaré (*Penelope* sp.), jakami (*Proechina*
 sp.), fish so called tukunare (*Cichla ocellaris*), *pané* (*Myliine* sp.), and piranha
 (*Pogonocherus*), and jakari (*Prochilodus* sp.), were listed as sources of "spirits of
 children".

225 and they will fish only in shallow clear rapids. When they must swim
 481 to catch turtles, a shaman guarantees their safety. A powerful shaman
 756 dreams. He travels to the river, ties the jaws of the alligators with wires,
 825 strikes the piranha across their teeth so they cannot bite, and ties up
 the large snakes into knots with their own tails.

756 The abundance of the food supply may also become the respon-
 825 sibility of the shaman. Some powerful shamans have the ability to
 [76] control the movements and the increase of the bands of pigs. These
 [103] shamans visit in their dreams the "home of wild pigs" near the Tapi-
 rapé River on a hill called by them Towaiyawa — Ringed tail of the
 coatí (*Nasua* sp.). There the shaman has sexual intercourse with
 female pigs, causing large increase in the bands. Those pigs that run
 fastest and are hardest to kill are these "children of the pançé". The
 [176] shaman's control over the movement of bands of pigs comes through his
 control over the *ancunga* called *ampukáya* — "crying spirits". Wild
 pigs are said to be "pets" of these spirits and follow them about.
 [224] Shamans who are powerful enough capture these spirits and take them,
 followed by their pets, to an appointed place where Tapirapé men wait
 to kill the pigs. None of the living shamans was believed to be capable
 of these controls over the wild pigs and several of the Indians blamed
 the recent lack of success of hunting expeditions and the apparent
 scarcity of pigs on the declining power of the shamans.

756 The dream journeys of the shamans also give them the power of
 787 prophecy, as was indicated by Panteri's vision of the fever in the village
 of the *peropí awa*. Such dream experiences are not limited to the demon-
 ic world but sometimes occur in other earthly regions. The shaman
 may visit Carajá villages or Brazilian settlements along the Araguaya,
 where he sometimes learns facts of great interest or importance to his
 fellow-tribesmen. When Panteri visited the Brazilian settlements along
 the Araguaya River for the first time, he said that he recognized faces
 that he saw for he had been to these places many times in his dream.
 When I returned to the Tapirapé village after three months' absence,
 one shaman claimed to have prophesied my arrival to the day. He had
 traveled in his dream, he said, to the Araguaya River and had seen
 my canoe moving up the Tapirapé River. Another in the same way
 foresaw the arrival of a young Tapirapé who was returning from se-

World View of the Tapirapé Indians

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A man now points to the southwestern horizon and says, "Ware killed all spirits there; they are only spirit souls now." (To the north and east, however, many demon spirits are still alive and active.) Ware engaged in a constant battle of wits with the spirit world. He killed many of the dangerous variety by setting fire to their stringy hair which trailed behind them, and he also killed off another group of beings, which clubbed men to death and drank their blood. [823]

Sometimes shamans (*panche*) see malevolent beings in their dream travels, and may even become friendly with them or receive their aid. For example, one shaman told of wandering far in an unknown forest as he dreamed, and of coming upon the spirits called *oreya*, who have long hair wound in a mass, and who carry only one arrow with which they can kill a man. They were about to shoot him but he shouted "No, I am a shaman!" and they left him alone, gave him food and aided him to return. Only shamans can have such relations with these supernaturals. Tapirapé laymen are afraid to dream. 773 776 787

The shaman is indispensable to Tapirapé living, not only because he has dealings with the spirit world, and through his wanderings enriches the knowledge of men, but also because he is of value in many practical ways. Thus he controls the pregnancy of women. Pregnancy is known to relate to sexual intercourse, but conception comes only when a shaman brings a child to a woman. Thunder, and several types of birds, animals and fish, have "children," that is, spirits of children. The shaman brings one of these "spirits" to a woman, putting it inside her while she sleeps. A woman who wants a child can, for example, bring honey to a shaman. This will make him dream, and he will bring her a child. Similarly, a barren woman presumably "had quarrelled much with the shaman." [825] 756 842

When Tapirapé swim, while fishing and shooting large turtles in the Tapirapé River, their safety depends upon the shaman. In this section of Brazil, rivers are full of alligators, *piranha* (carnivorous fish) and sting rays, and according to Tapirapé belief, large snakes lurk in deep pools. Before men may swim safely the shaman must tie the jaws of the alligators, strike the *piranha* across their teeth so they will not bite, and tie up the tails of the large snakes. When Tapirapé go hunting, it is up to the shaman to tell them where packs of wild pigs will be found, or to lead them down to a good spot in the plains country.²² Danger may lurk in all food; thus Tapirapé often take new corn, fresh meat, or any food, to have danger "blown" out of it by the shaman. [787] 756 825 751 [481]

The universe for the Tapirapé is not finite or entirely known; it is dangerous. Tales of culture heroes and experiences of shamans provide a [724] 772 756 773

²² When the Tapirapé have made kills of wild pigs, which are "pets" of Thunder he will be angry and send a sudden rain or cloudburst of the sky. If a Tapirapé sees an unexpected rainbow in the sky he will say, "The shaman has been successful against Thunder" (i.e., in finding game). [821] [776]

13: Wagley E-5 (1939-1940, 1953) 1964

SP22 Tapirape SP22

Champukwi of the Village of the Tapirs

the next two months we had daily sessions, some very brief and others lasting two or more hours.

In October of 1939, some six months after my arrival, I found it necessary to leave the Village of the Tapirs to go to Furo de Pedra for supplies and to collect mail that was held there for me. Valentim Gomes and I had come up the Tapirapé River, a tributary of the Araguaia, pulled by an outboard motor belonging to an anthropological colleague who had since returned to the United States. Now we had to paddle ourselves downstream. We could expect little help from the sluggish current and since the river was so low, it might be necessary to haul our canoe through shallows. Malaria had left me weak and I doubted that I was equal to this strenuous task. Several Tapirapé men, including Champukwi, were anxious to accompany us, but having Indians with us in Furo de Pedra was not advisable. First, they were susceptible to the common cold, which among relatively uncontaminated peoples such as these American aborigines often turns into a serious, and even fatal, disease. Second, unaccustomed to clothes, money, many foods, and other Brazilian customs and forms of etiquette, they would be totally dependent upon us during our stay in this frontier community. Nevertheless, the temptation to have my best informant with me during the trip and during our stay in Furo de Pedra was great and so we agreed to take Champukwi.

The trip was made slowly. Two good frontiersmen in a light canoe could have made it in three days, but we took eight. Champukwi was of little help in the canoe; unlike the riverine tribes the Tapirapé are a forest people who know little about the water, and few of them had ever traveled by canoe. Champukwi was unusual in that he could swim. Although he had more endurance than I, his efforts at paddling endangered the equilibrium of our canoe. However, he could shoot fish with his bow and arrow. The dry season had driven game from the open savanna which borders the Tapirapé River so that we were able to kill deer, *mutum* (another species of large forest fowl), and a wild goose to supplement the less palatable fare we had brought with us. Each night we camped on a beach from which we were able to collect the eggs of a small turtle, the *tracaja*, that had been buried in the sand. Only the mosquitoes which swarmed during sundown and early evening marred our trip. The experience remains one of the most memorable

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Charles Wagley

He was always pleased when we came to listen, particularly if we made the motions of joining in. He was an excellent wrestler in Tapirapé style, in which each opponent takes a firm grip on the pigtail of the other and attempts to throw him to the ground by tripping. Our wrestling match was brief although I was much taller than he; and his match with Valentim Gomes, who outweighed him by more than forty pounds, was a draw. Unlike so many who get a glimpse at a seemingly "superior" cultural world, Champukwi never became dissatisfied with his own way of life.

In June of 1940, my period of residence among the Tapirapé Indians ended. The waters on the savanna which had to be crossed afoot to get to the Tapirapé River where our canoe was moored had not completely receded. Many Tapirapé friends, among them Champukwi, offered to carry our baggage, made lighter after a final distribution of gifts, down to the river. The night before our departure of a festival with the usual songfest was held to celebrate the final phase of a ceremony during which a youth, this time the nephew of Kamiraho, became a man. Some Brazilian tribes make this occasion an ordeal by such means as applying a frame of stinging wasps to the body of the novice, but it is characteristic of the Tapirapé that the "ordeal" consists only of decorating the youth with a headdress of magnificent red macaw feathers, painting his body elaborately, and making him the center of dancing and singing—although the youth must himself dance continuously for a day and a night. Champukwi led the singing most of the night, but at dawn he came to our house to supervise the packing of our belongings into the basket-like cases made of palm which are used for carrying loads of any kind. He divided the baggage among the younger men. Even some of the older household leaders decided to accompany us but they, of course, did not carry anything. Our trip was slow because everyone was tired after the all-night festival and because of the water through which we had to wade. At one point, rafts had to be made to transport our baggage across a still-swollen stream. Since the Tapirapé do not swim—or, like Champukwi, they swim but poorly—it was the job of the *tori* to swim and push the rafts. I had the honor of swimming across the stream, pushing the respected chieftain, Kamiraho. (How he got back, I shall never know.) After a day and a half, we reached the landing on the Tapirapé River, and the next